

## OLD POSTAGE STAMPS

PHILATELISTS WHO GATHER THEM  
NUMEROUS AND ENTHUSIASTIC.

Fortunes in Collections—High Priced  
Stamps—Rare U. S. Issues—Varieties  
Not Sold to the Public.

An old and often dirty postage stamp is not to the average man either a thing of beauty or a joy forever, but to the philatelist it is both, at least if it be a rare variety. Philatelist is a word that has only lately received recognition by the standard dictionaries; it means one who makes a collection of stamps, and designates a class numerous throughout the world, and especially so in the United States. To the uninitiated it seems almost incredible that this hobby possesses at least fifty American periodicals devoted entirely to its interests; that it supports dealers in nearly every city whose sole occupation it is to buy and sell stamps for collections, some of them claiming sales aggregating \$100,000 yearly, and that it sustains a half dozen national societies with large memberships; yet all this is true.

And talk about cranks! Your genuine stamp fiend (for so he has been nicknamed) could give points to the baseball or bicycle enthusiast and beat him so badly that the latter's zeal would seem of an Arctic temperature. But, after all, he is not a bad sort of a fellow. There is no disputing about tastes, and there is something about the postage stamp that gives it great fascination as the object of collection. This is shown by the widely varied classes whence these philatists are drawn. The larger number of them is made of schoolboys, but wealthy business men, clergymen, lawyers and physicians are often found to be devoted to the pursuit. The royal families of the world contribute not a few collectors, among them the King of Siam, the girl Queen of Holland and the Duke of Edinburgh.

The finest collection ever gathered was that of the late T. A. Tappan, a former member of the English House of Commons. This pursuit engrossed much of his time, and he had at least one clerk constantly employed in attending to his philatelic correspondence. Mr. Tappan left his stamps, estimated to be worth \$500,000, to the British Museum, where they are now exhibited. Mr. Philippe von Ferrary, of Paris, the son of the late Duchess of Galliera, the prince of living stamp collectors. He is a man of great wealth, and has spent enormous sums in the pursuit of this hobby. Competent judges have estimated his collections to be worth from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000. They are carefully preserved in a steel room, thoroughly fire and burglar proof.

There are also many valuable collections in this country, although none that rival those just mentioned. The late A. G. Ford, of Hull, millionaire broker and capitalist, possessed one of the best of them. By his will it came into possession of his fifteen-year-old daughter, who is said to have refused \$40,000 offered for it by a New York dealer. It has been estimated that their present rate of increase will cause stamps to be more than double in value by the time this young lady comes of age. Not a bad investment; government bonds would not prove half as profitable, if this calculation is correct.

Both George and Edwin Gould have figured as philatellists, and bought some valuable stamps in their time, but the present status of their collections is not known to the public. There are between three and four hundred separate countries and colonies that either do issue, or have issued, postage stamps, and the total number of regular varieties recognized is close to thirty thousand. By far the larger part of these are strong and brought a curious glow of the Orient into gray New England homes. As a young captain in command of the battleship, which belonged to Mr. Theodore Lyons, he was the hero of an adventure which was famous at the time.

The ship had been used in trade with the Indians on the great northwest coast, and for that adventurous service had been pierced for musketry and provided with four six-pounders. She was now to be sent to China, and her owner ordered the cannon to be fired. But Captain Lyons took them, and it was well.

When, after a long voyage, he reached Hong Kong, he found the ship surrounded by a fleet of junk boats. Presently he saw a fleet of junk boats floating down the river. To satisfy a passenger, who showed some interest in the junk, he was thrown across the leading junk, which was the first of a fleet of peaceful fishermen.

On came the fleet of Chinamen—for the junks were those of the desperado Apookee. The cable was slipped, and the battleship began to move shoreward. But the junks were upon her; and from the first of them the swarming savages poured a volley of fire.

Several early stamps of British Guiana, from \$50 to \$1,000 each. The Sandwich Islands, Maldives and Afghanistan are also credited with some great rarities.

There are probably some hundreds of regular varieties that would bring over \$100 each, and besides these there is no end of freaks and oddities, that is, stamps printed in the wrong colors, on unusual paper, or something of the kind, enabling them to command extravagant prices. The market value of a stamp depends solely, of course, upon the law of demand and supply. Many of the oldest issues are not rare, because many of them were manufactured, and are yet preserved. For instance, a specimen of the first adhesive stamp, which was issued by England in 1840, may be purchased for three cents. On the other hand, certain varieties that are not really very scarce bring high prices, because their comparative rarity would warrant, because there is some special demand for them. This is the case with the larger number of issues of our own country. Most American collectors make a specialty of these, and so, in obedience to their extensive demand, the United States stamps bring, in general, higher prices than equally rare ones of other countries. Our first regular issue was made in 1847, but two or three years before that time the postmasters of several cities adopted stamps of their own to certify that postage had been paid. Nearly all of these local commands were high priced. One issued at New Haven is held at \$250; another, belonging to Millbury, at \$100, and a Brattleboro local at \$30. Only a specimen or two from New York and Providence can be bought for as few as five dollars.

Later government issues of the United States are numerous, and include many varieties of considerable rarity. Amongst them are the ninety-eight departmental stamps of 1873, which continued in use but a few years, but then superseded by the present penny envelopes. Stamps of the Treasury, War and Postoffice Departments are rather common, but the executive stamps for the President's use, and those of the Navy, Justice and State Departments are mostly rare to-day. The issue of the department last named embraced two, five, ten and twenty-dollar values, of which the five is the scarcest stamp ever issued by the government. It has brought nearly \$100 at auction.

**HIGH DENOMINATIONS.** Comparatively few know that we issue stamps of higher denominations than any other country in the world. They are the newspaper and periodical emissions, which range through a set of twenty-five denominations from 1 cent to \$50 in face value, and are amongst the most beautiful stamps in existence. These are not sold to the public, but only used by postmasters, who affix them to blank forms in amounts equal to the postage paid by publishers and news

## ON AN AFRICAN FARM

THE BUSINESS OF RAISING OSTRICHES FOR THEIR FEATHERS.

How the Wild Birds are Caught and Tamed—Savage Creatures That Often Attack the Farmers.

Strand Magazine.

South Africa is a country unlike any other on the globe. The general character is flat and sandy, relieved only by long, low, rocky ridges. These mountain ranges are the salvation of the landscape. Their craggy outlines are carved into a thousand abrupt and striking forms, their heads are constantly haunted by low-lying clouds of vapor, which the contending sun and wind draw together and disperse. Their sides are hollowed into ravines, or "kloofs," as the natives call them, and the distance into a perfect arroyo of changing hues. The apparently parched and sandy flats are covered by different varieties of dwarf bush, which are nibbled by the sheep.

A dry and arid prospect, and it is hard to conceive every inch of it is loaded below with vegetable life ready to shoot after the first rains of spring into a wealth of verdant grasses. Here and there dotted about on these flats can be seen the white farm buildings nestling among the trees—an oasis in the desert. In fact, these green spots can be seen for miles and miles away, with the whitewashed buildings glittering in the sun. Foliage is only to be seen around the homesteads and occasionally at an isolated fountain. The velvet all around is cheerless and naked, without so much as a rag of vegetation to cover it, and the eye hungers for a tree; the bones or stumps stick painfully out, a sight for the geologist, not the artist.

You arrive at the homestead, a square, red brick building, with a sign of relief, and glad to be out of the sandy glare and sandy plain. On every homestead the same familiar sights meet the eye. On the one side of the house stand the kraals; on the other the shed and wagon house. In front stands the dam, adjoining the vegetable garden, and a few steps further away the camp. Behind the house are the chaff house, tramp floor and butcher shop, where the niggers are rationed. In the camp run the large oxen, cattle, sheep and horses; and on the flats and mountains the birds are kept.

To our friends at home the ostrich is the center of interest in South African farming, and it is the ostrich alone that excites every one's curiosity and makes them take an interest in the life. So let me here give you some idea of the ways and means of conducting themselves when domesticated.

A well-fenced and secure enclosure is a luxury in the colony, and is only to be met with on the wealthier farms, the owners of which can afford to keep them in repair, and to place in their stock of the more expensive kinds.

Every ostrich farmer has his camp, which varies in size from a few acres to 1,000 acres, and in it he keeps his 30 or 50 birds, as well as a few cattle and horses. A camp is always a large place, and the best piece of grazing ground on the farm, and capable of holding more stock in proportion than any other part of the farm. Here the birds remain year in and year out, and are only collected and brought together on the average, once every four months.

These occasions are, let us say, in June, to pluck the prime feathers. By these we mean the long whites, numbering from eighteen to twenty in each wing, and the nine fancy feathers and a few long blacks, all taken at the same time. Four months later the stamps of these feathers are drawn out, and two months later again—that is, six months after the prime feathers are taken—the stamps are drawn out. Of these it is impossible to give any accurate number, as they vary so much. There exists a traveler's tale at home, that many as possible without inflicting pain on the bird, and at the same time leaving enough to keep out the cold.

**WILD BIRDS TIMID.**

An ostrich, like most other animals, in its wild state is terribly afraid of man, and of any unfamiliar sight, and flees at the appearance of anything new to its ken. When domesticated it becomes docile, and after a time assumes a position of authority and becomes master of the situation. From June up to September, or in fact, till Christmas, thousands of chicks are reared every year from some sort of accident. Chicks up to twelve months old die from various maladies, but seldom after they are full grown and are the victims of a broken leg, killed fighting, or from scarcity of food in time of drought.

The nest of an ostrich is a very crude affair, consisting simply of a round hollow carved out in the sandy soil. Sometimes the female bird may be seen scratching in the ground preparatory to laying her first egg; but this is not often the case, the hollow generally being made by the male bird, who sits on the eggs. One pair of birds will lay from ten to twelve eggs, but, when the case, three or four birds will lay in the nest, thus making the number of eggs up to twenty. The eggs are laid in a row, and are to be weeded out, as a bird cannot comfortably cover more than sixteen eggs.

Forty-four days is the recognized time to allow for hatching, and no chick is hatched until the family are taken out of the camp and brought to the homestead to be tamed. Where they come in continual contact with the farm hands, and are housed at night in the kraals, and are fed with corn during the summer months they will do well, but in winter, when food becomes scarce, must be fed morning and evening on barley or rape.

It is during the breeding season that the male becomes so savage, and his nature of defiance—"brooming," as the Dutch call it—is heard night and day. The bird inflates his neck in a cork-like fashion and gives utterance to three deep roars. The first two are short, but the third is very prolonged. The lion hunters all agree in asserting that the roar of the king of beasts and the most foolish of birds resemble one another almost exactly. When the birds are properly tamed they become a great source of amusement, as some think of dangerous animals, and to be overtaken on a sudden without time for preparation by a cheery bird from which the bird is taken, and to might result disastrously to the unfortunate hunter.

Undoubtedly the best weapon-barring a rifle—is the stick, and the bird is tamed by a rule, if a bird means to have your life or die in the attempt, he must show about thirty years when you receive him at the bayonet's point. He must be with flashing eyes, looking at you with a steady gaze, and drawing himself up to a height of ten feet or more. With wings outstretched, he must utter a cobra, he makes four or five strikes. You retreat a pace or two, so as to avoid the cobra, and as the bird makes his first strike and hold him off at arm's length till he learns that his efforts are useless. Drawing the stick sharply across the bird's neck, and holding him by the neck, rendering him insensible and making him bleed, this is the first step, for a while, till he recovers from his bewilderment and makes a fresh charge, when the fork is again presented.

**PIERCE FIGHTERS.**

A writer in the Strand Magazine says that he has seen a bird so savage as to charge seven times in fifteen minutes, twice receiving the blows of the fork through the neck. On another occasion he even more obnoxious to an ostrich than on foot, but so long as the horse is not afraid and will stand up to the bird, there is no fear of an accident. As he charges take care to have your horse well in hand, and as the bird makes his first strike catch him by the neck and hold on for all you're worth, till the bird becomes exhausted from his own efforts. The female bird is seldom vicious. While she has a nest or brood of young chicks she is as gentle as a lamb, and is very fond of charging and while domestic is a very mild affair compared to the male's.

What would result in three or four birds tackled you at once? It is a very rare occurrence, but it has happened. Each one of them separately, they first of all take one another, the conqueror fighting the vanquished.

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## WHEN THE FROST IS ON THE PUNKIN.

When the frost is on the punkin and the fiddler is in the shock.

And you hear the quack and gobble of the struttin' turkey-cock.

And the cluckin' of the guineys, and the cluckin' of the hens.

And the rooster's hallylooyer as he tiptoes on the fence.

O it's then's the times a feller is a-feelin' in his best.

With the rain sun to greet him from a night of peaceful rest.

As he leaves the house, bare-headed, and goes out to feed the stock.

When the frost is on the punkin and the fiddler is in the shock.

Their's something kindo' harty-like about the atmosphere.

When the heat of summer's over and the coolin' fall is betwixt.

Of course we miss the flowers, and blossoms on the trees.

And the mumble of the hummin'-birds and the buzzin' of the bees.

But the air is so appetizin' and the landscape through the haze.

Of a crisp and sunny morning of the airy autumn days.

Is a pictur' that no painter has the colorin' to make.

When the frost is on the punkin and the fiddler is in the shock.

Then you apples all is gathered, and the ones a feller keeps.

Is poured around the cellar-floor in red and yellor heaps.

And your cider-makin' over, and your wimmen-folks is through.

With their mince and apple-butter, and their soups and sausage, too.

I don't know how to tell it—but such a thing could be.

As the angels wantin' boardin', and they'd call around on me.

I'd want to 'commode 'em—all the whole indurin' shock.

When the frost is on the punkin and the fiddler is in the shock!

—James Whitcomb Riley.

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